DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 950 RC 023 820

AUTHOR	Howley, Aimee; Pendarvis, Edwina
TITLE	Recruiting and Retaining Rural School Administrators. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Charleston, WV.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-RC-02-7
PUB DATE	2002-12-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0027
AVAILABLE FROM	AEL, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325-1348. Tel: 800-624-9120 (Toll Free). For full text: http://www.ael.org/ERIC/digests/edorc02-7.pdf.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrative Problems; *Administrators; Collegiality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Job Satisfaction; *Labor Turnover; Quality of Working Life; *Recruitment; *Rural Schools; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS	*Administrative Stress; ERIC Digests; Principal Shortage

ABSTRACT

School districts nationwide, but especially rural districts, are finding it hard to recruit and retain administrators. In the past 25 years, administrators have had to address increasing demands for special programs, collaborative decision making, and accountability. In addition, potential for conflict with school boards and various constituencies is greater in the face of the heightened diversity of many rural communities. Long hours and relatively low salaries add to problems in recruiting and retaining new leaders for rural schools. Recent research offers some strategies for addressing the problem. Publicizing the satisfactions of the job is suggested for recruiting new administrators. Recruiting more women and minorities and improving salaries and benefits are other recommended strategies. Increasing access to formal professional development programs through distance learning and paid leave may be effective in attracting new applicants as well as sustaining the enthusiasm of veteran administrators. Access to less formal programs, especially those that focus on networking, also seems to be important for increasing the competence and job satisfaction of rural administrators. (Contains 16 references.) (TD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 470 950

ERIC
Educational Resources Information Center

DIGEST

EDO-RC-02-7 December 2002

Recruiting and Retaining Rural School Administrators

Aimee Howley and Edwina Pendarvis

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
including
Alaska Natives and American Indians, Mexican Americans, Migrants, and Outdoor Education

AEL
PO Box 1348
Charleston, WV
25325-1348

RC 023820

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDO-RC-02-7 December 2002

Recruiting and Retaining Rural School Administrators

Aimee Howley and Edwina Pendarvis

School districts nationwide are finding it hard to recruit and retain administrators. About half of all districts report a shortage of qualified applicants, with rural districts reporting slightly larger percentages (National Association of Elementary School Principals and National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1998). In general, the need for secondary school principals seems to be somewhat greater than for elementary school principals (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000). Rural states, such as Vermont, report more unfilled principals' positions than in the past (Hinton & Kastner, 2000); and most surveys, whatever the type of district, indicate that the average tenure of administrators is shorter than it was (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Research has identified several reasons for the shortage as well as strategies that show promise for eliminating it.

Reasons for the Shortage

Recent research (outlined below) suggests that job pressures may be the most serious reason why school districts are finding it difficult to recruit and retain educational leaders. Always demanding of time and energy, the administrative roles of rural superintendents and principals are more complex and perhaps more stressful than ever before. In the past 25 years, administrators have had to address increasing demands for special programs, collaborative decision making, and accountability. In addition, potential for conflict with school boards and various constituencies is greater in the face of the heightened diversity of many rural communities. Long hours and relatively low salaries add to problems in recruiting and retaining new leaders for rural schools, and these problems may intensify if retirements occur at anticipated rates.

Pressure for increased programs, collaboration, and accountability. Federal and state mandates have placed many new demands on administrators. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), for example, though it has improved education for children with disabilities, adds to the complexity of school administrators' roles. According to some sources, IDEA represents a major barrier to recruiting qualified applicants (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2001). School reform legislation that calls for site-based governance is also perceived as making administration harder. Shared governance requires school leaders to relinquish power as well as to make use of highly developed skills in interpersonal communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution (Madsen & Hipp, 1999).

State accountability requirements are another source of pressure (Howley, Pendarvis, & Gibbs, 2002; Ramirez & Guzman, 1999). Alabama principals regard accountability for academic performance—measured by test scores—as the most significant change in their jobs during the past five years (Kochan, Spencer, & Mathews, 1999).

Much of the pressure created by these mandates is caused by the lack of resources needed to address them (Public Agenda, 2001). Superintendents say inadequate resources detract most from their effectiveness (Glass et al., 2000), and principals agree. For rural principals in Alabama, budgeting and unfunded mandates present serious problems (Kochan, et al., 1999). Moreover, funding problems in rural schools may increase with the "graying" of rural America, if retirees on fixed incomes continue to reject higher taxes for education.

Pressure on school leaders also comes from trying to reconcile the conflicting expectations of different constituencies (Goens, 1998). Sometimes superintendents leave one district for another because of conflict with an important constituency—their school board. In fact, nearly 25 percent of superintendents who leave small districts report conflict with the school board as their reason for leaving (Glass et al., 2000).

Long hours and low salaries. Rural principals have traditionally worked long hours because they are expected to attend numerous school and community events, and the long hours needed to meet these responsibilities make the principals' job seem unappealing (Howley, Pendarvis, et al., 2002; ODE, 2001). Secondary school principals report that working 60- to 80-hour weeks is not uncommon (Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). Perhaps more typical is the 45- to 60-hour week (Graham, 1997). Because of job pressures and long hours, relatively low salaries can be especially demoralizing (Cooper et al., 2000).

Inadequate salaries seem to play a role in discouraging educators from applying for positions in rural districts (Cooper et al., 2000). On average, rural principals earn almost a third less in yearly income than nonrural principals; and the differential between teachers' and administrators' salaries is smaller than in nonrural districts (Stern, 1994). If low salary differential creates a disincentive for teachers to move into administration, that disincentive may be most acute in rural districts.

Impending retirements. Because of the projected retirements of many administrators in the near future, districts anticipate having a large number of openings. During the 1990s, approximately 50 percent of all practicing administrators reached retirement age (Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). And some states now predict that during the early years of the 2000s there will be a large increase in that percentage. The executive director of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, for example, predicts that about 75 percent of Minnesota's high school principals will be eligible to retire by 2005 (Pugmire, 1999).

Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Rural School Administrators

Recent research on the shortage of school administrators (described below) offers some strategies for addressing the problem. Among these are strategies positioned to improve recruitment of new administrators: (1) publicizing the satisfactions of the job, (2) encouraging applications from women and minorities, (3) improving salaries and benefits, and (4) providing professional development programs that enable

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
including
Alaska Natives and American Indians, Mexican Americans, Migrants, and Outdoor Education

AEL
PO Box 1348
Charleston, WV
25325-1348
www.ael.org/eric

new administrators to meet the challenges of educational leadership. Some of these strategies may also help to increase retention of school leaders. Improved professional development, for example, not only gives administrators the confidence to take on the leadership role at the beginning of their careers, these programs also provide administrators with the competence to achieve success and, as a result, to realize satisfaction through their work. Satisfaction associated with making a difference for children and families turns out to be a powerful motivator for most administrators (Howley, Pendarvis, et al., 2002). Another important strategy for retaining competent school leaders is to help them build and sustain support networks. Such networks have been found to be particularly encouraging to rural principals who may not be able to find mentors and supportive colleagues within their own districts (Howley, Chadwick, & Howley, 2002).

Publicize satisfactions of school administration. The job satisfaction ratings of rural principals, except their ratings for income, are as high as or higher than those of nonrural principals (Stern, 1994). And similarly high levels of satisfaction are also reported by rural superintendents (Ramirez & Guzman, 1999). Clearly, school leadership has satisfactions as well as hardships. According to Howley, Pendarvis, and Gibbs (2002), these satisfactions center on the ability to make a difference for children, parents, teachers, and communities. Publicizing such satisfactions may be an effective way to recruit teachers to positions of school leadership.

Recruit more women and minorities. Despite the predominance of female teachers, administrative positions are held predominantly by men. And even with increased numbers of female and minority group educators becoming prepared as administrators, school districts continue mostly to hire white men (Glass et al., 2000). Qualified women and minority educators provide an important resource for meeting current and impending administrator shortages (Cooper et al., 2000). To tap into this resource, however, districts will need to become more open-minded about the types of individuals whom they believe can achieve success as school leaders. And leadership preparation programs will need to make special efforts to encourage women and minority applicants by partnering with local "grow-your-own" and "aspiring principal" programs.

Improve salaries and benefits. Even though many rural districts face economic hardships, they should nevertheless think about investing in leadership. Improved salaries are clearly one way to make this investment, but local boards can also provide benefit packages that are attractive to principals and superintendents (ODE, 2001). Providing stipends for advanced course work, offering portable pension plans, and paying moving expenses are among the optional benefits recommended in recent reports.

Improve professional development. Of superintendents in rural and smaller districts, only 43 percent have doctorates, compared to 64 percent overall (Cooper et al., 2000), suggesting a need to increase access to formal preparation programs through distance learning and paid leave. Access to less formal programs, especially those that focus on networking, also seems to be important for increasing the competence as well as the job satisfaction of rural administrators (Howley, Chadwick, et al., 2002). Indeed, relevant graduate programs and other opportunities for professional development may be highly effective in attracting new applicants, supporting the work of beginning principals, and sustaining the enthusiasm of veteran administrators.

Conclusion

Rural school administration has been made more complex and stressful by a changed social context. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified administrators suggest an imbalance between the demands of the job and the resources available to meet those demands, particularly in underfunded districts. Research suggests the advisability of adopting specific strategies to address the growing shortage. Among these, rural districts might specifically want to focus on efforts to publicize the satisfactions of administration, encourage applications from women and minorities, increase salary and benefits, and provide access to relevant professional development.

References

Cooper, B. S., Fusarelli, L. D., & Carella, V. A. (2000). *Career crisis in the superintendency? The results of a national survey.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED443167)

Glass, T. E., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). *The study of the American school superintendency, 2000: A Look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium.* Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED440475)

Goens, G. A. (1998). Too many coxswains: Leadership and the principalship. *NASSP Bulletin, 82*(600), 103-110.

Graham, M. W. (1997, March). *School principals: Their roles and preparation.* Paper presented at the National Conference on Creating the Quality School, Oklahoma City, OK. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED411576)

Hinton, L., & Kastner, J. (2000). *Vermont's principal shortage.* Retrieved December 12, 2002, from http://www.uvm.edu/~vlrs/doc/vermonts_principal_shortage.htm.

Howley, A., Chadwick, K., Howley, C. W. (2002, April). *Networking for the nuts and bolts: The ironies of professional development for rural principals.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED463908)

Howley, A., Pendarvis, E., & Gibbs, T. (2002, October 16). Attracting principals to the superintendency: Conditions that make a difference to principals. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*(43). Retrieved December 12, 2002, from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n43.html.

Kochan, F. K., Spencer, W. A., & Matthews, J. (1999, April). *The changing face of the principalship in Alabama: Role, perceptions, and gender.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED431232)

Madsen, J., & Hipp, K. A. (1999). The impact of leadership style on creating community in public and private schools. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 8*(3), 260-273.

National Association of Elementary School Principals and National Association of Secondary School Principals. (1998). *Is there a shortage of qualified candidates for openings in the principalship? An exploratory study.* Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Ohio Department of Education. (2001). *Toward the development of statewide policy to address the Ohio principal shortage: Recommendations of the Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators/Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators.* Columbus, OH: Author.

Public Agenda. (2001). *Trying to stay ahead of the game: Superintendents and principals talk about school leadership.* New York: Public Agenda Online. Retrieved December 12, 2002, from http://www.publicagenda.org/specials/leadership/leadership.htm.

Pugmire, T. (1999, April 10). *The principal shortage* [radio broadcast]. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Public Radio. Retrieved December 12, 2001, from http://news.mpr.org/features/199908/30_pugmiret_safety/principal.shtml.

Ramirez, A., & Guzman, N. (1999, October). *The rural school district superintendency: A Colorado perspective.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Rural Education Association, Colorado Springs, CO. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED437235)

Stern, J. D. (1994). *The condition of education in rural schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED371935)

Yerkes, D. M., & Guaglianone, C. L. (1998). Where have all the high school administrators gone? *Thrust for Educational Leadership, 28*(2), 10-14.

Dr. Aimee Howley is Professor of Educational Administration and Chair of the Educational Studies Department at Ohio University.

Dr. Edwina Pendarvis is Drinko Fellow and Professor of Gifted Education in the Marshall University School of Education.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0027. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI, the Department, or AEL.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools is operated by AEL. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and operates the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education for these same four states. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center. AEL is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer. www.ael.org • 800-624-9120 • aelinfo@ael.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
X	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").